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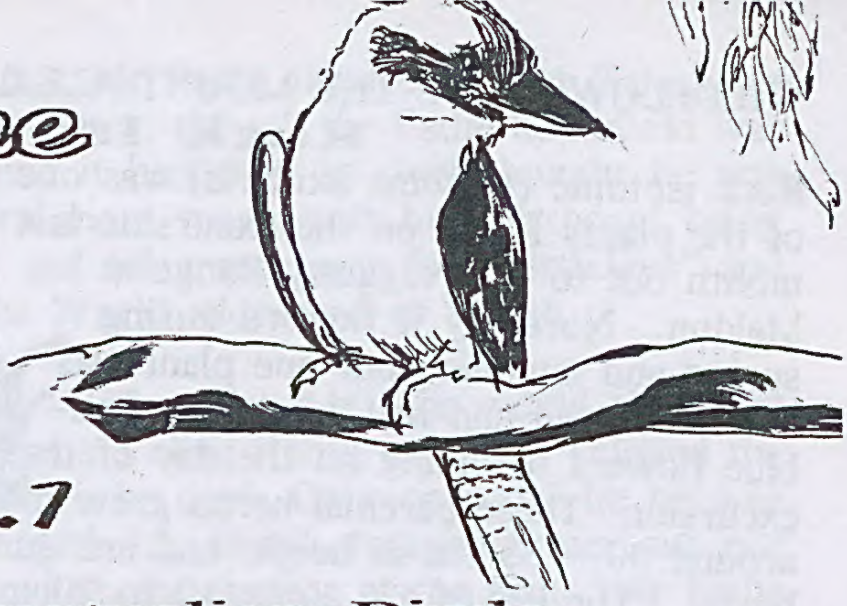


Atlas of Australian Birds

The Atlas of Australian Birds Mark 2 is about to take off. Some people will remember being involved in the first atlas, completed in 1981. Well, it's about to happen again - the listing of sightings Australia-wide to give a national bird census.

Four year funding from Environment Australia (Federal Government) to Birds Australia (RAOU) is in place and planning is well under way to settle the statistical methodology, computor technology for data collection and, most importantly, how to design and run a survey system that is user friendly, enjoyable and useful for the eventual user.

As well as the "General Atlas" there will be specialised components of the project, likely to be on-going, such as tracking long term changes such as intensive sampling of selected sites several times at different seasons to monitor the effects of vegetation and land use changes; likewise a wetlands monitoring program that will fit into existing wetland and waterbird data bases could be put in place.

Atlassers will be encouraged to record birds by location related to habitat rather than confining it to a map grid location; presence/absence may well be more value than numerical counts for future conservationists. Since the first Atlas less than 20 years ago it is believed that up to 10 million hectares of land have been cleared of its original vegetation and 100,000 hectares revegetated - naturally with millions of birds thus displaced we must assume that the status and distribution of birds has changed for the worst, yet we have no measure of the impact. That is what the Atlas will tell us.

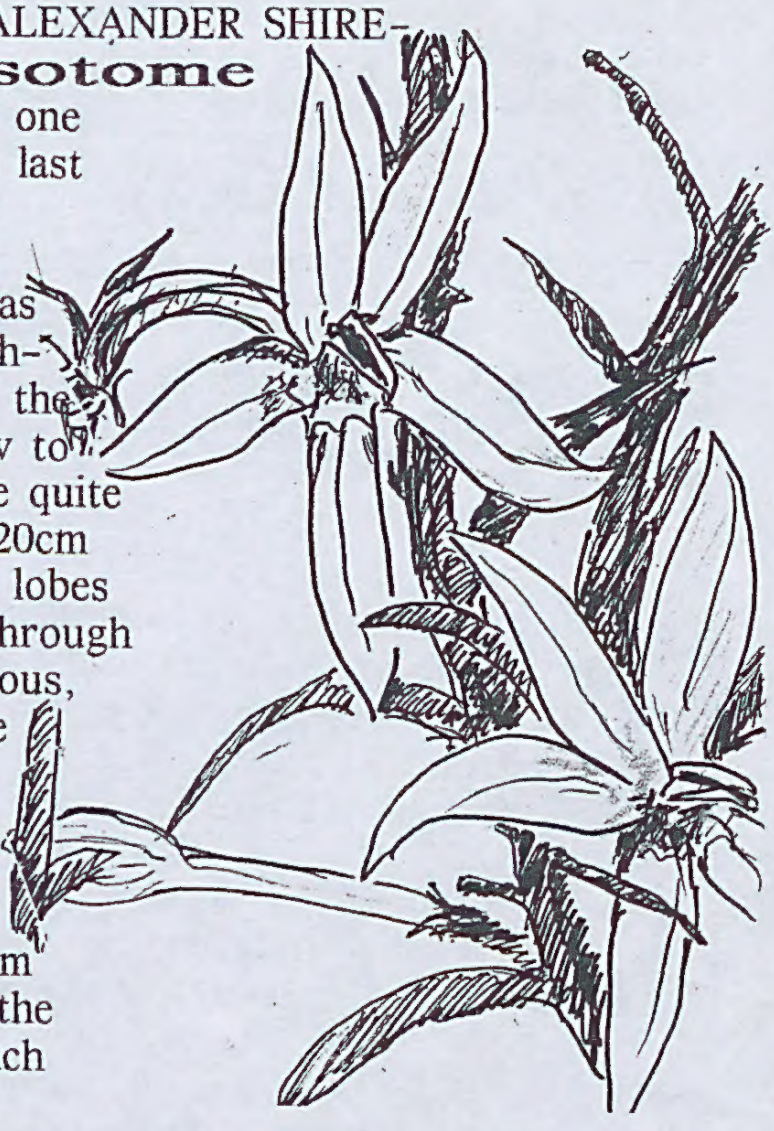
It is hoped that as many people as possible will take part. It doesn't have to be a time demanding, labour intensive, expert dominated activity. A 20 minute record at a site of your choice can be fitted into normal activities, or you can do it on travels to out-of-the-way places. It provides the opportunity to get involved in a nation-wide project of real value to conservation.

Regional Organisers will be appointed to distribute and collect survey sheets.

Chris Morris

WILDFLOWERS OF THE MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE-

Rock Isotome



Rock isotome (Isotoma axillaris) was one of the plants found on the excursion last month out to the Nuggetty Range at Maldon. Normally it flowers during spring and summer, but one plant was a bit confused and had a few purplish-blue flowers blooming on the day of the excursion These perenial herbs grow to around 30 - 35 cm in height and are quite bushy. The leaves are about 10 to 20cm long and are deeply cut with narrow lobes of irregular length. The white sap through -out the plant is burning and poisonous, and should never be allowed near the face, as it can even cause temporary blindness if it gets in the eyes.

Isotomes are related to the lobelias, but with regular petals spreading from the narrow corolla tube, whereas in the lobelia the two upright petals are much shorter than the other three.

Of the 11 species of Isotoma, two, I. axillaris and I. fluviatilis (Swamp Isotome), are found in this district. Rock Isotome is found among granite rocks on hillsides, and one of the best places for it is on the granite area of Mount Tarrengower and Nuggetty. There is also some near the towers on Mount Alexander.

Rita Mills

Birch v. Oregon

Last Christmas Phee and I were delighted to welcome a young lady who had been a student of mine when I taught in British Columbia in 1975. Karen has done several things since she last visited in 1982, including getting married, but most recently she has completed a degree in Forestry and is about to undertake post-graduate studies, having just recieved a grant to do so. The latter we learnt when she phoned us recently.

The major industry in British Columbia is, of course, timber production, including production of Oregon, or Douglas Fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii). To maximise regrowth after clearcut logging, which is the standard method of obtaining the timber, the Forest Practices Act of B.C. legislates that crop trees be unimpeded by competition from weed

It was also through Splash that Mr Eadie discovered that Platypuses hibernate for short spells during winter, though the Eadie household was thrown into a panic the first time it happened as they thought he was dying. But he lived on for several more years, with his "birthday" being celebrated each year, and cards and telegrams sent for "birthdays" and Christmas came from all over the World addressed to Splash.

He loved a game with a mop, with which Mr Edie would tickle his tummy when he rolled over. He would cling tightly to it and enjoyed the game right up to a few days before he died. Only once did he become irritable and raked at Mr Eadie with his spurs, toutching him but not breaking the skin, but leaving fluid on the surface of the skin. Mr Eadie described the movement as being as swift as a snake striking.

Each evening before retiring to his nest Splash would rake his fur with both fore and hind feet until it was almost dry.

Several other people, including David Fleay, are mentioned in the booklet, telling of the different aspects of their discoveries about the Platypus, or their strange ideas about handling them. Attitudes towards scientific method and conservation were very different in those days, and yet it is from these people, their discoveries, their mistakes and their experiences that today's knowledge is built. I think it is very likely that in future years some of our brilliant ideas will be regarded as pretty ignorant, too!

Rita Mills

Observations.

* About midday on June 20 Stewart Morris heard a terrible screeching of what he thought were Galahs in the tree next door, but when he went outside he couldn't find them. His wife had heard the noise from inside their brick house and also went out to see what it was. They realised that there was a huge flock of about 500 birds, possibly Galahs, about 500 feet up and flying in a north-easterly direction. While they watched two smaller flocks also flew over at a great height, one of about 300 and the other about 100 birds. Did any one else see them, and were they Galahs? or Corellas?
* Margaret Dunn tells of a flock of Choughs at her place destroying all her peas and making an awful mess in the garden. She also reported seeing more than 100 Long-billed Corellas on a neighbouring farm.
* Ken Dredge reported well over 300 Long-billed Corellas in paddocks in Richards Road over a period of three weeks.
* One Swift Parrot was spotted on Bill Orgill's property at Yapeen.
* North of Fish Point near Swan Hill Ern and Leslie Perkins saw a large bird on the ground in a paddock. On closer inspection it proved to be a White-breasted Sea-eagle, which flew off while they watched.

* Recently John Turnbull heard a knocking at the window of his home at Barkers Creek in the early hours of the morning. The early visitor proved to be a wandering Echidna. On another morning while he and Jacqui breakfasted they watched a White-faced Heron float down onto the pond only 4 metres away. As they have put netting over the pond the fishing wasn't very successful.
* The North Castlemaine Galahs are apparantly thinking of setting up house again as one came in recently carrying a sprig of gumleaves in right claw. They use fresh gumleaves to line the nest.
* George Broadway tells us that the Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in his Allepo Pine always hold the cone in their *left* claw!
* Penny Garnett reported seeing a pair of Shovellers on a dam on the Newstead end of the Mia Mia Track.
* Phee Broadway has given an update on Scratch's activities. (see CN246) After her daughter got home from a couple of weeks away the nest had grown to 2m high by more than 3 metres across. At that stage there didn't seem to have been any egg laying done.
* Wattle notes - Golden Wattle at Tarnagulla (Ern Perkins) and Margaret Dunn's near Maldon, and Cootamundra Wattles starting to flower around Castlemaine over the couple of days before the July meeting (several reports).
* A question posed to the meeting was - How far south do Blue-faced Honeyeaters come? They are regularly seen in Bendigo when the Ironbarks are in flower, but has anyone seen them south of Bendigo?
* Ern Perkins reported seeing thousands of corellas on the way home from the excursion at Maldon last month. He has also had Pied Currawongs taking over his garden on a couple of different mornings.
* At Yapeen Margaret Badminton has had both Pied and Grey Currawongs in her garden.
* Crimson Rosellas have been so enthusiastically pruning the eucalypts at Barkers Creek that the ground under them is littered with leaves. There are also two families of wrens living around the house, and two of the females break off from the others from time to time to whistle and scold at the windows. John Turnbull.
* There have been mixed flocks of White-naped and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and Silvereyes in the Yellow Gums around the house in Blakeley Road for over a week in the middle of July. Rita Mills.
* Four Brolgas were seen at Marnoo between St Arnaud and Rupanyup by Maggie Oliver. She also reported that there was a pair of Masked Lapwings nesting near the verandah post at the Campbells Creek Community Centre. All who went to the U3A dinner saw and heard them! They had a clutch of olive-brown eggs about 20cm from the post. Maggie was told that they have nested there for the last 3 or 4 years.
* There was a wonderful show of Woolly Wattle in a gully on the Weewak track at Glenluce, about 1 km from where it joins the Porcupine Ridge Track. There was also a very nice patch of deep pink, pink and

species for a specified time after planting. Short term studies had shown that maximum conifer growth occurred in the absence of competing vegtetation. Now, one of the significant "weed" species is Paper Birch (Betula papyrifera). However, removing all Birch from an area has significant ecological implications.

Birch plays and important role in nutrient recycling and therefore maintaing long-term productivity in B.C. forests. Birch leaves are particularly rich in Nitrogen, Magnesium and Calcium. Birch is also an important food source for White-tailed Deer, and Moose, and moderately important in winter for Elk, Caribou and Mountain Goat. Mature trees are also important for many cavity nesting bird species.

Recent studies have suggested however that Douglas Fir may in fact do better when growing in mixed stands with Birch rather that when growing in pure stands. This may be because the Fir benefits from the Mycorrhizal association with which it is more readily inoculated from the Birch. It is suggested that the soil is favourably modified, both chemically and biologically by the presence of the Birch. Trees inoculated with the Mycorrhiza show greater photosynthetic rate and greater height growth than trees grown in isolation.

Karen will be studying tree growth rates at four sites in B.C. in the Interior Cedar-Hemlock forest (ICH), in order to determine the effect on the growth of Douglas Fir, of Birch and the densities at which this is significant.
To do this she will measure the following:-

photosynthesis rate
growth, including height, girth canopy volume
stomatal conductance
foliar nutrient status, i.e. concentrations of Nitrogen, Phospherus, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium and Manganese in both Fir and Birch leaves
incidence of root disease
plus a number of other factors.

To do this she must venture into the thick forest which is inhabited by, not only the animals already mentioned, but also by bears. As a precaution she never goes into the forest without taking her can of bear spray which rather resembles a capsicum spray, but is more powerful. Unfortunately it is necessary to be quite close to the bear for it to be effective. So far, when she has on occasions met a bear, she had been able to retreat without having to use it.

George Broadway.

NEW MEMBERS This month we welcome Gwen Hackett and Margaret Panter to the Club. Apologies to Dianne and Zoë Thomson for getting their name wrong last month!

Hunter Street Birds, July

In spite of the heavy frosts recently, and the fact that the bird bath is often frozen until noon, the smaller birds such as Goldfinches, Silvereyes, Eastern Spinebills, New Holland Hoaneyeaters, Yellow-faced Honeyeaters and the inevitabe Sparrows usually enjoy a good splash around in the chilly water. The Spinebills and New Holland Honeyeaters feed on the grevilleas and camellias; Silvereyes, parrots and Blackbirds on cotoneaster berries - until a recent visit by a family of Pied Currawongs stripped the tree. These latter seem to have taken up residence in the garden at "Buda" across the road, and I have seen them in pursuit of our local Magpies, After the most recent episode of "Wild Screen" on ABC television ("Currawongs - Wolves in Birds' Plumage") I view their invasion with alarm.

Shirley Parnaby

"The Platypus"

A little while ago I was given the booklet "The Platypus" to hand on to some of our grandchildren. Written by Charles Barrett and published in 1944 by Robertson and Mullins it is dedicated to Robert Eadie,, M.B.E., who "added so much to our knowledge of the World's most wonderful Mammal". Quite a lot of his knowledge was gained from a platypus he named "Splash", which became unusually tame in its platypussary at "Glen Eadie", and was widely known and loved.

Splash was taken into captivity on Feb. 11 1933 when he was 3 or 4 months old. He was found, apparantly disorientated, wandering about in a corn field about 30 m from the river and was handed on to Mr Eadie, who in charge of the Sir Colin McKenzie Sanctuary at Healsville at the time. He he took him home to Glen Eadie and placed him in the platypussery which he had designed after several other attempts by various people had been made unsuccessfully to keep Platypusses in captivity.

When he was first placed in the platypussary he disappeared into one of the dens and refused food for 11 days, but, just as Mr Eadie decided he would have to release him into the river he accecpted the plate of worms which had been left out for him, and didn't look back. From this experience it was found that the Platypus can fast for quite some time without severe repercussions, but they also found that they are very hard to fill with the right food when they decide they will eat after all! The Platypus they found requires a daily amount of up to 25% its own body weight of its specialised food requirements each day.

white Common Heath along the Porcupine ridge track. Rita Mills.
* Malcolm and Margaret Archer have a Koala living on their property at Campbells Creek.

Owl Report 17/7/98

The Southern Boobook is still solitary in his tree at the Botanic Gardens. The second bird has made occasional brief visits, and, on referral to notes made over the last six years, I find they usually get together for a spot of canoodling in early August/September before the real business of raising a family begins. Unfortunately there are increasing numbers of happy and boisterous dogs being walked in the gardens and the owl tree is also their favourite tree. As a result, the owl pellets are constantly scattered far and wide, and it is difficult to find much evidence of their diet. The few I have managed to locate reveal that there is plenty of food about, and they contain many bones - even small skulls - and a great amount of fur and pathetic whiskers!

Shirley Parnaby.

Birds by any other Name....

Chris Morris's comment at the last meeting about Galahs being one of the few birds which retain their Aboriginal name set me thinking - and searching - and I found that there really *are* very few. Half a dozen or so have an Aboriginal name as their official common name, and a few more have a native name that is less commonly used.
The common ones are -
Boobook, Brolga, Budgerigar, Currawong, Galah, Jabiru, Kookaburra and Wompoo. Probably the Lowan, or Mallee Fowl and the Quarrion or Cockatiel could be added to that list, too, but have you heard of the Berrin Berrin (Rainbow Bee-eater), Bun Bun (Yellow-throated Miner), Chigaree (Yellow-rumped Thornbill), Chillawong (Pied Currawong), Goran Goran, Warrangaree or Widung-gurra (all Pied Oyster-catcher), Jerryang (Little Lorrikeet) or Weeloo or Willaroo (both Bush Stone Curlew)? And of course the is the Wonga Wonga or Wonga Pidgeon, but that is still very few compared with the many birds listed in the Readers Digest bird book, often with several alternate names.
The way several of the Aboriginal names mimic the call of the bird makes me wonder if Echong (Rufous Whistler) might be another one. Weeloo certainly brings to mind the call of the Bush Stone-curlews that I heard so many years ago while holidaying with my Granny at Lyal!

Rita Mills

GDT PUBLIC WALKS - Sat 15 Aug, Daylesford - The Balt Camp. Duration, 5-6 hrs; leave the Boathouse, Lake Daylesford at 9am, finish at The Balt Camp, Camp Rd. Bullarto Sth.; rated medium - hard. Bookings - at least 4 days prior to Ed Butler, 5348 3059. Suitable footwear, clothing, drinks and food essential.

C.F.N.C. PROGRAMME

General Meetings are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) hall, at 8.00 pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street.
Excursions leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days.
Business Meetings are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS

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Fri Aug. 14 **Volcanos.** Speaker is Dr Julian Hollis. 8pm UCA hall.

Sat Aug 15 **Trentham, to the Geology Museum.** Leave 13 Mostyn St at 1.30pm.

Sat Aug 8 **Swift Parrot Survey** Leave 27 Doveton St at 10am. Take lunch, afternoon tea and binoculars. CFNC have been asked to cover Muckleford bush and Smith's Reef.

Fri 11 to Sun. 13 Sept. **Field Naturalists Get-together at Castlemaine.** Details and registration form in CN #246. **CFNC members** please book at August meeting if you intend to go to the dinner and/or barbecue. Others, deadline for booking and payment is Fri Aug 28.

Thur 24 Sept. **Broom Pull** at the Butterfly area of the Botanical Gardens, Froomes Rd. Start 9 am. Bring gardening gloves, something to kneel on, a friend or two, snacks and drinks. Finish about 2.30 - 3.00pm. A free barbecue to follow.

Fri Oct 9 **Spiders.** Speaker is Jenny Shield. UCA Hall 8pm.

Fri. 16 to Sun 18 Oct. **V.F.N.C.A. Campout at Warnambool.** For details see CN #244 p7.

Sat Nov 14. **Terrick Terrick.** All day outing.

Fri Dec 9 **Members and Visitors Night.** Your night to contribute!

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Committee; G. Broadway (Pres.), M. Dredge (V.P.), B. Maund (Sec.), M. Badminton (Treas.), R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), J. Turnbull, M. Oliver, C. Morris, K. Turner, E. Perkins.

Subscriptions - Ordinary membership: Single $16, Family $24
Pensioner/student: Single $12, Family $18 Supporting : $25
Newsletter posted: Membership + $6

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